

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**21 February 2018**

**Report of the Chief Executive**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 SKILLS AND WORK READINESS**

**This report provides an update on added-value activities that the council has been delivering under the ‘skills and work readiness’ agenda and proposes future activity.**

**1.1 Background**

1.1.1 Following on from a Skills Panel (comprising Members, Officers and a representative from the Kent Education Business Partnership) in November 2016, the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board agreed the recommendation set out in Report ERG 17/5 to:

- Contribute financially and through office time to the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network.
- Deliver initiatives in partnership with the Kent Education Business Partnership.
- Deliver a ‘Speed Networking Event’ at a local Secondary School in partnership with the Federation of Small Businesses.

1.1.2 The council has also been instrumental in the delivery of a number of other initiatives aimed at supporting skills development and work readiness, these include:

- Aylesford Jobs and Training Fair – in partnership with Jobcentre Plus and the RBLI.
- West Kent Skillsfest – in partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council, the West Kent Partnership, Kent Education Business Partnership and local schools.
- Employment Street Pilot – intensive week-long course working with local job seekers in Tonbridge.

## 1.2 Delivery of Skills and Work Readiness Initiatives (as set out in Report ERG 17/5):

1.2.1 **West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network:** The Enterprise Adviser Network is a national network that connects schools and colleges with employers and careers programme providers to work together to create meaningful encounters with the world of work for young people. The network is based on evidence that a young person who has four or more encounters with an employer is 86% less likely to be unemployed or not in education or training, and can earn up to 18% more during their career. However, at the moment only 40% of schools offer young people this kind of encounter, and unemployment among young people is three times higher than overall unemployment.

1.2.2 The focus of the EAN is to therefore address this gap by bringing together employers, schools and colleges, and careers programme providers to:

- Give young people multiple opportunities to get to know the world of work, understand what work is, explore their options and build real confidence about their future.
- Bring the right people together to create strong connections between employers and careers programme providers and schools and colleges in ways that put young people's futures first.

1.2.3 Following a successful funding application to the Careers and Enterprise Company, the launch of the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network (WKEAN) took place in July 2017 at the West Kent College Campus in Tonbridge. In September 2017, the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Co-ordinator, Simon Harris, started in his new role, and as of January 2018, Simon has signed up the following Tonbridge & Malling education establishments:

- Hillview School for Girls, Tonbridge
- Tonbridge Grammar School
- Weald of Kent Grammar School, Tonbridge
- Hugh Christie Technology College, Tonbridge
- Aylesford School - Sports College
- Grange Park School, Borough Green
- Hadlow Rural Community School
- Hadlow College
- West Kent College
- Wrotham School

1.2.4 To date, half of these schools have also now been linked up with an enterprise adviser from the local business community, and are actively working together.

1.2.5 A regular working group, comprising the key funders (Careers and Enterprise Company, Hadlow Group, West Kent Partnership, and the 3 West Kent Local

Authorities) has also been established to provide support to the co-ordinator and monitor progress.

- 1.2.6 **Kent Education Business Partnership – Employability Days:** two events have been established with local schools – Aylesford School - Sports College on 27 February 2017 and The Malling School on 07 March 2017.
- 1.2.7 These events will be focussed on around 100 students in each school at Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11) with all pathways for progression showcased – college, employment with training, apprenticeships and higher education.
- 1.2.8 Each event will comprise 5 zones that groups of 20-25 students will rotate around every 50-60 minutes. Each session will target a specific area of employability, that will be supported by industry and (where appropriate) educational organisations. The zones will be:
- Speed Exhibition Fair – the students will visit 8-10 stands each representing a sector in order to gain a better understanding of business, what is required within the workplace and routes to a career.
  - Communication Workshop – an employer-led, interactive workshop offering advice and guidance on presentations and communication skills.
  - Interview Techniques – students will be offered hints and tips, but also receive a 10/15 minute one-to-one interview with a business ambassador, with feedback provided.
  - CV Writing – support with developing an effective CV, both for employment and Further/Higher Education.
  - Variable Workshop (determined by the school) – helping to create an understanding of a particular industry (e.g. biochemistry, customer care, construction and engineering) and the importance it has in our everyday lives.
- 1.2.9 **Skills 3030 (Speed Networking Event):** On 19 October 2017, the first Skills 3030 event took place in West Kent at Hugh Christie Technology College. A partnership between the Federation of Small Businesses, Hugh Christie Technology College and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (with the support of the WKEAN) helped to deliver this event, which saw 20 businesses and 20 business studies students attend.
- 1.2.10 The format for the event was relatively simple - whilst students took part in informative workshops, business owners found out about a 'hot topic' (in this case, how they could get involved in the West Kent Enterprise Advisor Network and Kent Supported Employment). Then both groups met together for an hour of facilitated speed-networking.
- 1.2.11 The event gave businesses the chance to forge strong links with a local school, share experience of running a business and meet potential young employees. In addition, students got to find out from local employers about job opportunities in their sector and get advice on routes to employment in areas that interest them.

1.2.12 Other schools in the borough have been approached about doing a Skills 3030 event during 2018, and so it is hoped that this partnership will continue to reap benefits next year.

### 1.3 Additional Activity:

1.3.1 **The Aylesford Jobs and Training Fair:** took place on 01 November 2017 at the Capel Morris Centre in Aylesford. Cllr Brian Luker welcomed 23 employers and training providers and 150 job seekers to the event. The stands were occupied by:

#### Employers/Agencies

Tesco.com  
 ASDA  
 McDonalds  
 UPS  
 Prison Service  
 Menzies Distribution  
 Smyth's Toys  
 DEBRA  
 360 Recruitment  
 Big Motoring World  
 Poundstretcher  
 247 Professional Healthcare  
 Gavin Astor Nursing Home  
 Renowned Agency  
 East Malling Centre  
 Blue Arrow Recruitment  
 Golding Homes  
 Home Bargains

#### Training Providers/Careers Advice

Kent Apprenticeships  
 National Careers Service  
 RBLI  
 Go Train  
 Mainstream

1.3.2 As well as staff from the council and Jobcentre Plus, 8 RBLI Volunteers also helped with the running of the event.

1.3.3 In addition to the stands, 3 workshops took place during the event:

- A CV preparation workshop had 12 attendees which was run by the RBLI.
- An interview techniques workshop had 14 attendees (also run by the RBLI), and
- A 'Marketing Yourself' workshop had 11 attendees which was run by 360 Recruitment Agency.

1.3.4 There was a lot of positive feedback from job seekers, and a large number of people came away from the event having arranged an interview or having submitted a job application. The same venue has already been provisionally booked up for a Jobs and Training Fair event on 10 October 2018.

1.3.5 **West Kent Skillsfest:** Over 1250 students aged 14-19 from across West Kent took the opportunity to attend the West Kent Skillsfest 2017 at the Assembly Hall Theatre, Tunbridge Wells on 10 October 2017.

1.3.6 The aim of the event was to inspire young people as they plan their future aspirations and was a partnership initiative between West Kent schools, AXA PPP, The West Kent Partnership (including TMBC) and Kent Education Business Partnership.

1.3.7 The response from employers in West Kent was excellent, with 75 companies from a wide range of sectors providing stalls and interactive activities to showcase and inform students of the opportunities and progression available.

1.3.8 **Employment Street Pilot:** a partnership between the council, the RBLI and 360 Recruitment led to an intensive one-week long course being piloted in Tonbridge in November 2017. The course was focussed on 8 residents with challenging barriers to employment, and included a mixture of confidence-building, lifestyle advice and practical support, such as:

- Job searching techniques and applying for jobs
- Walking the High Street and enquiring about job opportunities.
- Preparing for an interview
- Budgeting
- Making a healthy lunch.

1.3.9 During the week-long course:

- 117 online job applications made
- 75 CVs were handed out to businesses (face to face)
- 67 job application forms were sent
- 9 job interviews were secured
- 3 people moved into volunteering positions
- 2 people turned down offers of employment due to travel issues
- 1 person moved into part-time employment (cleaning)
- 1 person enrolled onto training
- 1 person stopped engaging with the course and was reported to Jobcentre Plus.

## 1.4 Next Steps:

1.4.1 Having delivered on the recommendations set out in Report ERG 17/5 as well as a number of other initiatives as set out in section 1.3, it is proposed that the following be undertaken in 2018/19:

- Continue to support the West Kent Enterprise Advisor Network, especially in recruiting enterprise advisers for schools in Tonbridge and Malling.

- Once delivered, undertake a review into the effectiveness of the Employability Days and, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, consider a future course of action.
- Building on the success of the event at Hugh Christie Technology College, aim to deliver further Skills 3030 events in the borough, in partnership with the Federation of Small Businesses (initial discussions with Wrotham School are ongoing)
- Deliver the Aylesford Jobs and Training Fair in October 2018, and investigate the potential for other similar events elsewhere in the borough.
- Support the delivery of the West Kent Skillsfest in October 2018.
- With key partners, pull together a programme of activity aimed at supporting people into employment.

1.4.2 Any financial contribution towards this activity will be met through existing economic regeneration budgets.

## **1.5 Legal Implications**

1.5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.6.1 These are no financial implications arising from the report.

## **1.7 Risk Assessment**

1.7.1 Not applicable.

## **1.8 Equality Impact Assessment**

1.8.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

## **1.9 Recommendations**

1.9.1 That the proposals for 2018/19, as set out in section 1.4.1, **BE ENDORSED.**

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and the Chief Executive confirm that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

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